DATELINE: NEW YORK #124 OCTOBER 27, 1976
ROBERT L. REDEEN

CRACKING DOWN ON TRAFFIC IN WILDLIFE
(INSERTS IN TAPE LIBRARY)

ANNCR: DATELINE, NEW YORK...PICTURES IN SOUND OF PEOPLE, PLACES AND EVENTS IN AMERICA'S METROPOLIS. TODAY, WE HEAR A REPORT FROM VOA'S ROBERT L. REDEEN ABOUT A NEW HEADACHE FOR THE UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE. HERE IS ------- WITH THE DETAILS.

NARR: THEY ARE PILING UP IN ROOMS AT KENNEDY INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT. SO FAR, THERE IS NEARLY A MILLION DOLLARS WORTH OF THESE ITEMS RANGING FROM EXPENSIVE FUR COATS TO MOOSE HEADS AND STUFFED CROCODILES. THEY ARE WILDLIFE PRODUCTS AND RIGHT NOW, AT LEAST, THE AUTHORITIES DON'T KNOW HOW THEY'LL BE ABLE TO DISPOSE OF THEM.

THESE PRODUCTS HAVE ALL BEEN MANUFACTURED FROM ANIMALS ON THE ENDANGERED SPECIES LIST AND THUS ARE COVERED BY BOTH UNITED STATES LAW AND AN INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT WITH OTHER NATIONS. AGENTS FOR THE FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR HAVE BEEN SEIZING THESE PRODUCTS AT KENNEDY AIRPORT FOR THE PAST EIGHT YEARS AS ATTEMPTS WERE MADE TO TAKE THEM IN OR OUT OF THE COUNTRY. JACK DOWNS, WHO HEADS THE ENFORCEMENT DIVISION OF THE SERVICE, OUTLINES THE ACTIVITIES OF HIS AGENTS.

TAPE: CUT ONE -- DOWNS

"WE FEEL THAT OUR OBLIGATION IN THIS RESPECT IS TWOFOLD: WE MUST ENFORCE THE LAW, BUT ON AN INDIVIDUAL BASIS WE FEEL THAT OUR OBLIGATION IS TO INFORM THOSE PEOPLE WHO DO TRAVEL THROUGHOUT THE FOREIGN COUNTRIES TO BE AWARE OF THE PROBLEM OF BUYING PRODUCTS DERIVED FROM WILDLIFE."

NARR: USUALLY, MR. DOWNS AND HIS AGENTS FILE CIVIL SUITS AGAINST VIOLATORS OF THE LAW BUT, IF THEY FEEL IT'S CALLED FOR, CRIMINAL SUITS CAN ALSO BE BROUGHT WITH MAXIMUM PENALTIES OF TEN YEARS IN PRISON AND TWENTY THOUSAND DOLLARS FINE FOR EACH VIOLATION. TWO YEARS AGO AGENTS EXAMINING A LIVE SNAKE FOUND HEROIN STUFFED DOWN ITS THROAT IN PLASTIC BAGS AND THE SMUGGLER WAS ARRESTED. OVER THE LAST FEW MONTHS AGENTS AT THE NEW YORK DIVISION CAUGHT THE EXPORTER AND MIDDLEMAN FOR AN OPERATION TAKING AMERICAN ALLIGATORS OUT OF THE COUNTRY ILLEGALLY IN SHIPMENTS WORTH FIFTY TO SIXTY THOUSAND DOLLARS EACH.

AGENTS WHO DETERMINE THE LEGALITY OF THE INCOMING WILDLIFE PRODUCTS MUST TAKE ACTION NOT ONLY AGAINST ILLEGAL IMPORTERS BUT ALSO AGAINST THOSE WHO VIOLATE THE LAWS UNKNOWINGLY. HOWEVER, IN SUCH CASES FINES ARE USUALLY NOT IMPOSED.

JACK DOWNS SAYS THERE HAVE BEEN A NUMBER OF EMOTIONAL SCENES AT THE AIRPORT WHEN WOMEN PROUDLY WEARING NEW FUR COATS PURCHASED OVERSEAS AND UNAWARE OF THE LAW WERE FORCED TO SURRENDER THE TREASURED GARMENTS.

TAPE: CUT TWO -- DOWNS

"YES, THE AGENTS THAT WORK UNDER ME -- AND I MYSELF -- WE HAVE RUN INTO THIS, AND IT IS A VERY TOUCHY SITUATION. WE TRY TO HANDLE IT AS TACTIFULLY AS POSSIBLE BUT MOST OF THE TIME WE COME OUT THE BAD GUY."

NARR: NOW THAT THE FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE AGENTS ARE CRACKING DOWN, THE QUESTION OF DISPOSAL OF THEIR CATCH IS LOOMING LARGER EACH DAY. THE LAW SAYS THAT THE SEIZED ITEMS MAY NOT BE SOLD.

TAPE: CUT THREE -- DOWNS

"IN EFFECT, WE'D BE VIOLATING THE PROVISIONS OF THE LAW THAT WE ARE ENFORCING. THE CONGRESS HAS AUTHORIZED US TO DISPOSE OF THESE -- THIS WAS JUST DONE RECENTLY -- AND WE'RE STILL PURUSING WHAT AVENUES ARE AVAILABLE TO US TO DISPOSE OF THESE IN A MEANINGFUL WAY."

NARR: LIVE ANIMALS AS WELL AS WILDLIFE PRODUCTS ARE ALSO INSPECTED BY THE AMERICAN AGENTS. ONE INSPECTOR, SAID MR. DOWNS, WAS BLINDED BY A SPITTING COBRA. SPECIAL AGENT DOWNS SAYS THERE IS A RATIONALE BEHIND THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT AND THE RELATED LACEY ACT WHICH HE AND HIS MEN ARE ENFORCING.

TAPE: CUT FOUR -- DOWNS

"WHAT WE'RE TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH, AT LEAST, IS TO STARVE THE APPETITE FOR THE CONSUMPTION OF WILDLIFE PRODUCTS BY THE AMERICAN PEOPLE. IN THIS DAY AND AGE WHEN WE'RE SPEAKING OF CRITICAL HABITAT FOR THESE CREATURES AND THE WORLD POPULATION KEEPS EXPLODING WE MUST PROVIDE FOR ALL THESE CREATURES FROM THE VERY SMALLEST THAT WE FIND ON THE ENDANGERED SPECIES LIST TO THE BIGGEST. WHEN WE LOSE OR FORSAKE A PART OF OUR WILDLIFE HERITAGE I THINK THAT WE LOSE A PART OF OURSELVES."

NARR: THE ENFORCEMENT OPERATION AT KENNEDY AIRPORT AND OTHER PARTS OF THE PORT OF NEW YORK IS A PILOT PROJECT. THE OTHER SEVEN MAJOR PORTS IN THE UNITED STATES WILL SOON FOLLOW THE LEAD OF NEW YORK.

ANNCR: THIS HAS BEEN DATELINE, NEW YORK, PICTURES IN SOUND, WORDS AND MUSIC OF PEOPLE, PLACES AND EVENTS IN AMERICA'S METROPOLIS. JOIN US AGAIN NEXT -------- FOR ANOTHER DATELINE.

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